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# THE BAPTIST *Record*

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IN NEED — Residents of the Renato Vegas section of Culiacan, Mexico, queue for medical assistance at a clinic set up by Pearl River Association volunteers during the Mississippi group's mission trip on Jan. 17-24. (BR special photo)

## WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

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## Support for Persians urged

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — The Persians of Iran, a predominantly Muslim people group in the Middle East, will be the focus this year for an annual day of prayer and fasting for a people group without free access to the gospel.

A new video and other materials will be free to Southern Baptists participating in the 24-hour emphasis, which begins at 6 p.m. on May 29.

Each spring, Southern Baptists and other "Great Commission" Christian groups devote a day — called the Day of Prayer and Fasting for World Evangelization — to pray for a people group that has not heard the good news of God's love and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Besides the video, an information kit contains a prayer guide and feature coverage adapted from The Commission, magazine of the International Mission Board (IMB). In addition, specific prayer requests for the day of prayer and fasting will be posted on the IMB Internet website ([www.imb.org](http://www.imb.org)).

To order the information kit, interested persons should call 1-800-866-3621 or write Customer Services, International Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230-0767.



ON MISSION — Members of the Pearl River Association medical/evangelistic team gather at Zion Baptist Church in Culiacan, Mexico, during their Jan. 17-24 mission trip. (BR special photo)

two simultaneous revivals held each night at mission churches.

"I was overwhelmed by the response," said Bob Rogers, pastor of First Church, Poplarville. "Every single time I was able to share the plan of salvation with a group of people in the medical clinics, at least one person prayed to receive Christ."

The evangelistic team took 450 Bibles to give away, but found such hunger for Scripture that they ran out of Bibles a day early. Fortunately, they were able to find about a hundred more Bibles to give away the next day.

The Baptist pastor in the town of Cofradia said, "Before you came, my people listened to my sermons but had no Bibles. Now that you have given them Bibles, my job will be easier."

Workers noticed that when

people in Cofradia received Bibles, they often would gather together excitedly and begin to read the scripture to one another.

Myers had words of praise for the Beards.

"Tommy and Donna were great to work with volunteers, which allows our team to be able to do as much as they can do."

"Last year he used 54 volunteer groups. Using volunteers is extra work on a missionary, but Tommy sees the benefit of volunteers in multiplying his ministry."

"A volunteer goes to be a blessing to someone else, and in return receives a blessing."

"The churches they work with are blessed. Our churches receive a blessing when we return and report what God has done. It goes in full circle as Christians serve."

It's a never-ending blessing," Myers said.

## Looking back

10 years ago

Cindy Allred, Hope Hurst, Suzanne Oakley, and Reba Young of First Church, Bruce, receive the Mississippi Acteens Citation. Fewer than 10 young women had previously earned this highest achievement. Charles Nestor is pastor. Lily Oakley is Acteens leader.

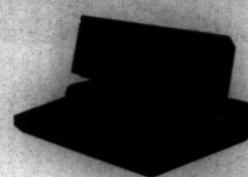
25 years ago

The 1978 Royal Ambassador Congress draws 610 boys and counselors to the Mississippi Coliseum. Honor chapter of the year was the Crusader chapter from Springdale Church. Mrs. Floyd Higginbotham is counselor.

50 years ago

A small storehouse beside Knox Church into which members brought their corn crop tithe nets \$433 for the church treasury. A. B. Hatfield, pastor and Clarke College student, said the Storehouse and God's Acre plans proved a blessing for the entire church.

## EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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# Coming soon to your local church

One of the vexatious issues we face today in America is the elevation of homosexuality to cultural and, in some cases, legal and spiritual equality with God's plan for the heterosexual union of one man and one woman for life.

Each day seems to bring news of another "victory" toward the ultimate goal of mainstreaming homosexuality — state legislation, court rulings, Hollywood movies, television series, school courses, and corporate insurance benefits, to name a few.

The homosexual movement has picked up some powerful supporters over the years, especially in the entertainment and political fields.

President Clinton's openly homosexual appointments to the federal government recently posed proudly for a group photograph — and there were a lot of people in the photo.

The Republican Party has been chastised for fawning over the Log Cabin Republicans group which is composed of — you guessed it — homosexual Republicans.

As the movement's juggernaut crashes through conventional American society, it has not left the Christian church untouched. The Metropolitan Community Church network is organized around a thoroughly homosexualized doctrine, including clergy and rites.

United Methodists recently went through a wrenching ecclesiastical trial in Nebraska to decide whether a pastor violated church law by performing a "covenanting" service last fall for a pair of lesbians. A jury acquitted him.

Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Roman Catholics have all struggled with demands for mainstreaming homosexuality. Most have resisted but the cries grow louder.

Southern Baptists have avoided these destructive internecine battles by taking a strong stand against the mainstreaming of

homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle.

Unfortunately, this stand has been interpreted by those with an agenda as "homophobia" — that made-up, nonexistent word to label anyone not on board the homosexual train.

The fact is that most Southern Baptists understand as well as anyone:

- ◆ All have sinned (1 John 1:8).
- ◆ Homosexuality is one of many sins God abhors (Rom. 1:18-32, among other passages too numerous to cite).
- ◆ Salvation is available to those who will accept Jesus (John 3:16).

Those are the reasons many Southern Baptist churches have initiated special ministry efforts to homosexuals, not to excuse inappropriate behavior, but to help them turn from their sin and build a right relationship with God.

We do not accept drunken behavior, but we must try to turn the drunkard toward Jesus. We do not condone adultery, but we must seize the opportunity to save the adulterer from a tragic eternity.

So it should be with our witness to homosexuals. We can make it known that we are opposed to the sin of homosexuality, while making every effort to reclaim the sinner for Christ.

Our mission from the moment we become Christians is to bring everyone we can to the Savior.

If only we do our job, we know that Jesus will convict them of their sins and lead them from the darkness, as he did for each of us.



This is an awesome responsibility we have accepted, to reach out to sinners regardless of their sin. It's not always comfortable, but it is our responsibility.

If the hot-button issue of homosexuality hasn't yet come to your church, be assured that it's on the way.

Our culture is challenging us with this controversy at every turn, in both religious and secular matters.

Will you be prepared? Will your church be prepared?

Most important of all, will we be found faithful to our call?

## GUEST OPINION:



*You know you're middle-aged when...*

By Bob Rogers, pastor  
First Church, Poplarville

thought. I had already told Mary that there was no way I was going into the office on Tuesday. "It's my day off and my birthday."

When I drove up to the church Monday morning, the marquee on our church sign proudly announced, "Oh, No! Bob Rogers is 40!"

Remembering what I had done to staff members who had previously turned 40, I thought, "I don't know if I want to go in there."

The door to my study was draped in black, and inside my study were black balloons hanging from the ceiling and a wheelchair behind the desk.

Signs all around the room celebrated how old I now was. One sign stated, "My mind is

gone, my memory is far, I wish I could remember where I parked my car!"

The neat (I still use words like "neat" to make myself feel young) thing about this is that I get a lot of "welcome to the club" comments from my elders.

So for all you fellow mid-lifers, here's a not-so-spiritual list of the Top Ten Ways a Pastor Can Know He Has Officially Become Middle Aged:

10. He wears his hair longer than the youth minister.

9. His Amy Grant Concert Tour T-shirt is two sizes too small.

8. He has more clothes on his exercise equipment than in his closet.

7. The new president of the seminary is younger than he is.

6. Many of the deacons are younger than he is.

5. If his optometrist puts any more lines in his glasses, they are going to look like Venetian blinds.

4. When he visits the nursing home, he knows everybody.

3. When he says, "Finally, brethren," it no longer necessarily means the sermon is about to conclude.

2. He is about to give up ever getting to wear that leisure suit to another revival.

1. He forgets that he parked his car in the drive-through and leaves it there, blocking the entire congregation throughout Sunday School.

The Bible says there is a time to laugh and a time to weep (Ecc. 3:4). A major birthday like 40 can be a time to weep, but if you're a Christian you know where you're going to end up eventually.

I'd rather laugh. Wouldn't you?

# 53 new international missionaries commissioned

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP) — Exhibiting a passion for winning the world to Christ, Southern Baptists' 53 newest missionaries told 5,000 people in Del City, Okla., how God led them to quit their jobs, sell their homes, and leave family and friends for service overseas.

"I was a merchandise manager with J.C. Penney and loved management when God called me to missions," said appointee Terry Willett.

"I was managing my dad's lady's clothing store when I accepted the call to missions," said Leslie Burch.

"I wanted to be rich, when I told the God of creation I'd do whatever he asked," said Steve Roach.

"I realized the time had come to leave my job as an Air Force psychologist in

order to be obedient to my lifelong call to missions," said Dick Price.

The testimonies poured out as an exuberant audience at First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., celebrated through music, orchestra, prayers, and pageantry.

Other testimonies revealed the diversity of the people God is calling as missionaries today.

"My father committed suicide when I was 4, and growing up in New York City with its opportunities and temptations left me empty," said Richard Piscopo.

"As a teenager on drugs, I asked Jesus into my life. He met me that night, and I have never been the same," he said.

"I praise the Lord that I grew up in Zimbabwe, Africa, to godly missionary parents," said Philip Griggs.

"I grew up as a GA in Travis Avenue Church in Fort Worth, where Dad served as a Royal Ambassador leader and Mother was a Girl's Auxiliary leader," said Nancy Griggs.

The new missionaries will now go through eight weeks of intensive training at the Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Va., before going overseas, some to locations so sensitive the board is unable to identify them publicly.

International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin noted that, whereas 53 at one commissioning service seems large, "it is not very many relative to the needs of a lost and dying world."

"When we picture those masses of people around the world" who still need to hear about Christ, the whole Southern Baptist Convention

(SBC) international missionary force of 4,200 seems so small and limited, he said.

Citing 2 Chronicles 20, Rankin challenged the new missionaries to recognize the battle is not theirs, but the Lord's, and encouraged them to deal with the multitudes and opposition they will encounter with an attitude of praise.

More than 30 people registered commitments to missionary service at the conclusion of the evening.

## THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

# THE BAPTIST Record

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## Summer missionaries answer '911' call

By Carl M. White  
Associate Editor

"It's a 911 world out there and you've told God you will take the call."

So said Mississippian Lewis Myers, vice-president for World A Strategies at the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, as a record number of Baptist Student Union (BSU) summer missionaries were commissioned March 28 at Gulfshore Assembly in Pass Christian during the 1998 BSU Leadership Training Conference (LTC).

The veteran missionary, speaking from 1 Peter 3:13-16, presented a half-dozen challenges to the students.

"Always be prepared," Myers said, "when you feel like it and even when you don't."

A record 167 students were commissioned to serve in North America and around the world this summer, according to Weaver McCracken, associate director of student work for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB).

"This number represents 50% more than has ever been commissioned and sent before," McCracken said.

"God is using college and university students in a tremendous way. We are all scrambling and doing our best to keep up with where he is leading in reaching the lost with this generation," McCracken said.

"We are people of little faith," said Micah Carter, a student at Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain, and chairman of the State Student Missions Committee.

After last year's record 111 summer missionaries, the committee set what they thought was an ambitious goal of 125 summer missionaries for 1998.

"Then we received 194 applications," Carter said. Of that number, 174 were appointed, with 167 actually commissioned.

Mandy Trammell, a William Carey College sophomore communications major from Florence, was recognized as the 2,000th student to be appointed a Mississippi BSU summer missionary.

"It was an honor to realize that I was just one of the many called from our state," Trammell said.

She will serve at the Baptist Fellowship of Columbia, Conn., doing primarily youth work but also helping in every aspect of the church's ministry.

"It's an opportunity to witness to people who are different than those I am normally in contact with.

"I will get to learn about people outside of the Bible belt. I will also have to learn to depend more on God," she said.

Carter noted that the first BSU summer missionary was appointed in 1947 from Blue Mountain College.

It took 40 years for Scott Vaughn from the University of Southern Mississippi to be appointed as the 1,000th summer missionary in 1987.

Vaughn is now BSU Director at East Central Community College in Decatur.

However, it took only 11 more years, to reach the 2,000th summer missionary in 1998, Carter noted.

Jerry Merriman, MBCB director of student work, said this year's student summer mission program has exceeded the highest hopes in terms of attendance, enthusiasm, and quality.

"Our prayer is that those who were trained as new leaders and commissioned as missionaries will make a significant difference as they serve this summer, and lead their campuses during the '98-'99 school year," Merriman said.

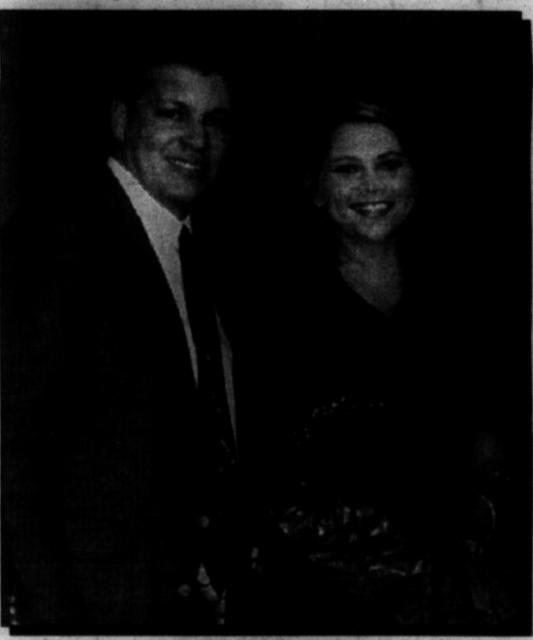
In addition to the missionary commissioning, newly-elected leadership from local BSUs were offered training for the coming year.

There were over 700 students registered for the weekend and more than 950 present for the commissioning service, according to McCracken.

"It was a moving spiritual experience to be in a commissioning service for 167 young people whose evident and stated intent is to make a difference in their world," said Eugene Dobbs, MBCB Executive Assistant.

"They deserve the prayerful support of all Mississippi Baptists as they circle the globe this summer bearing a positive witness for Jesus Christ," Dobbs added.

For more information about summer missions and student work in Mississippi, contact Merriman or McCracken at P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-530. Telephone: (601) 968-3800 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.



2,000 AND COUNTING — Scott Vaughn (left), Baptist Student Union Director at East Central Community College in Decatur, presents a bouquet of flowers to William Carey College sophomore Mandy Trammell of Florence, the 2,000th Mississippi summer missionary to be appointed. She will serve in Connecticut. Vaughn was the 1,000th Mississippi summer missionary in 1987. (Photo by Carl M. White)



CALLED TO MISSIONS — Summer missionary Meredith Brady (holding microphone), a William Carey College religion major from Pearl River, La., introduces herself and tells a capacity crowd assembled at Gulfshore Assembly in Pass Christian for the 1998 Leadership Training Conference that she will serve the Lord this summer in Nevada. Looking on are fellow summer missionaries (from left) Kristy Brashier and Janet Broadbent. (Photo by Carl M. White)

# IMB head offers review of China situation

By Jerry Rankin, President  
International Mission Board

## Missionary Carter dies in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (BP) — Marie Blocher Carter, a Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionary in Argentina, died March 23 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She was 59.

Carter, from Lee's Summit, Mo., became ill March 13 with flu-like symptoms. She was admitted to British Hospital in Buenos Aires March 19 with a lung infection. Doctors later diagnosed her with blood poisoning, and her condition deteriorated rapidly despite treatment, said missionary Clayton Rock, strategy coordinator for IMB missionaries in Argentina.

## Justice Scalia to visit MC

Mississippi College (MC) will host U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia at 6 p.m. on April 7 in Swor Auditorium on the school's Clinton campus. There is no admission charge, but tickets are required for admittance. A limited number of tickets are available by calling (601) 925-3248. At Scalia's request, no cameras or recording devices will be allowed in the auditorium.

As we move toward the 21st century, God is swinging open doors previously closed, and the harvest is accelerating. More than ever, God's people must obey the Great Commission in discipline the nations.

International Mission Board (IMB) efforts to be on mission with God during these times have unfortunately been misrepresented by those who seek to interpret a strain in its relationship with the China Christian Council (CCC).

The IMB has always worked with integrity and respected the leaders of the China Christian Council. Since initiating renewed involvement in 1985 in China by providing teachers and funding through the Amity Foundation, the IMB has acknowledged the leadership of the CCC.

We deeply respect Bishop Ting, who served until recently as general secretary. We also respect his successor, Wenzao Han, and others for their genuine faith and devotion to the church in China. We take no issue with their motives and Christian experience.

The IMB never adopted an official policy to work exclusively with Amity and the CCC. Reports have accused former IMB President Keith Parks, and Lewis Myers, who directed Cooperative Services International and was in charge of work in China, of violating agreements with the CCC by initiating other channels of work.

The IMB has always sought to use every legal means possible in its strategy. Even Wenzao Han, who has taken a hard line toward the IMB, at one time said Southern Baptists were very large, had many resources and would not be limited to a relatively small organization such as Amity, the foundation set up by the CCC to utilize foreign personnel and resources. Since 1986 the IMB has reported that it was sponsoring other personnel to work with other government entities.

Why do detractors consider IMB per-

sonnel who serve under the CCC as non-missionaries, but call those who perform exactly the same tasks under other entities missionaries? Missionaries are not allowed in China, but isn't it obvious that no foreigner could gain a work permit for China without accountability to the same government represented by the CCC? As long as the China government requests teachers, business consultants and others from abroad, the IMB should sponsor and support Christians who respond.

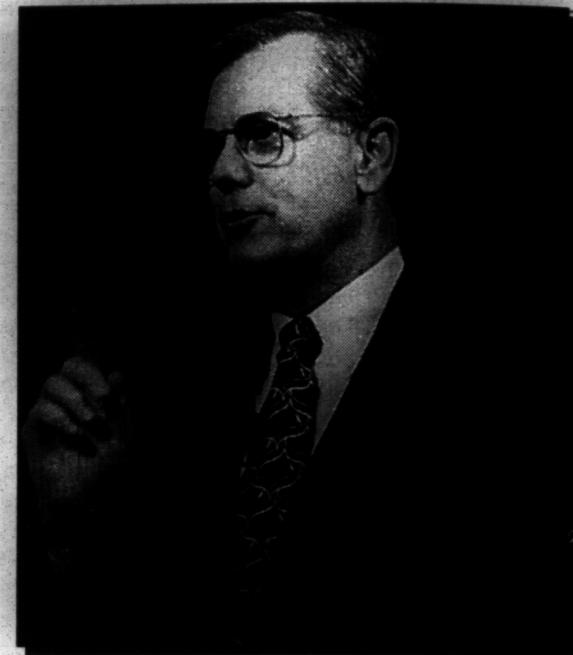
We are not maintaining a patronizing, neo-colonial posture, dictating policy, starting churches, and engaging in illegal activity while ignoring Chinese leadership, but the question is, "Which leadership?"

Southern Baptists must never forget that the driving force of missions is the lostness of a world without Jesus Christ and God's desire that those from every tribe and people and tongue and nation know his salvation and worship him. At the IMB our vision is "to lead Southern Baptists to be on mission with God to bring all the peoples of the world to saving faith in Jesus Christ."

Foundational to our strategy is to ask, "Where is God at work?" With reference to China, "Is God at work only through the open churches, or is he also at work in the massive evangelistic response and church growth that is exploding all over China? Our relationship with the CCC is not the defining issue in our China strategy.

Jesus Christ is God's only provision for salvation, and people without personal faith in him are lost and will spend eternity in hell. Too many Southern Baptists have lost their sense of urgency, so they advocate a limited role in missions and evangelism. Are we committed to respect and abide by government policies in our work in 130 countries around the world? Are we committed to cooperation and respect of Christian leaders wherever God gives us the privilege of serving? Absolutely, but not if it compromises our calling.

Persecution of Christians continues in



Rankin

China. Documentation indicates it is at its highest level since the cultural revolution in spite of a profile of open churches and rhetoric of government representatives. Many have been influenced to endorse a Constantinian, state-controlled church that contradicts all we proclaim to stand for as Baptists.

What happened to the cherished Baptist principle of separation of church and state? Do we protest infringement of our own government's policies into our first-amendment rights and invoke our historic fight for religious freedom, then ignore these divinely inherent principles in China because its society is not free?

Only God, who is sovereign over the nations, could open such a door of opportunity as we see now in China. May Southern Baptists not be deterred but be faithful and obedient to the Great Commission task to which he has called us, not only in China, but all over the world.

## Agricultural missionary addresses Miss. group

RIDGELAND, Miss. (Special) — Retiring Southern Baptist agricultural missionary Harold Watson, addressing the Mississippi Baptist Agricultural Missions Fellowship (AMF) annual meeting Feb. 27 at Highland Colony Church in Ridgeland,

reported that visitors to the Baptist Rural Life Center in Mindanao, Philippines increased from 150 in 1971 to just over 20,000 from all over Asia in 1977.

The primitive-type agricultural experiment station, established by the Watsons, is designed to teach visitors how to raise cows, rabbits, ducks, gardens, dairy goats, fish, bees, and home gardens.

The program has been recognized by local governments and the president of Philippines.

In addition to the Watsons, who discussed agricultural missions' past, present, and future, agricultural missionary James H. Ziler, who has spent the last four years on the island of Haiti, displayed photographs and discussed the economic and religious

conditions on this island Nation.

Haiti is one of the poorest of all nations, with a population of seven million people on an island that is about the size of the state of Maryland.

Ziler said that about 15% of the population on the island is Baptist.

One of the projects now in operation in Haiti is tree planting. In recent years, ten million trees have been planted per year, while over thirty million trees are harvested each year.

Another project in which Ziler participated was well digging. Although very successful, long range maintenance and operation of wells creates a problem.

New AMF officers elected for the coming year include:

- President: Frank Prewitt, catfish farmer from Belzoni.

- Secretary: Ed Trott of Jackson, retired agricultural missionary from Brazil.

- Treasurer: Carl Prewitt, former missionary in the Philippines and pastor at First Church, Byram.

- Vice president: Richard L.

Parish of Amite, La., retired Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station agronomist.

- Chairman of the Board of Trustees: Gene Triggs of Madison, retired agricultural chemicals company executive.

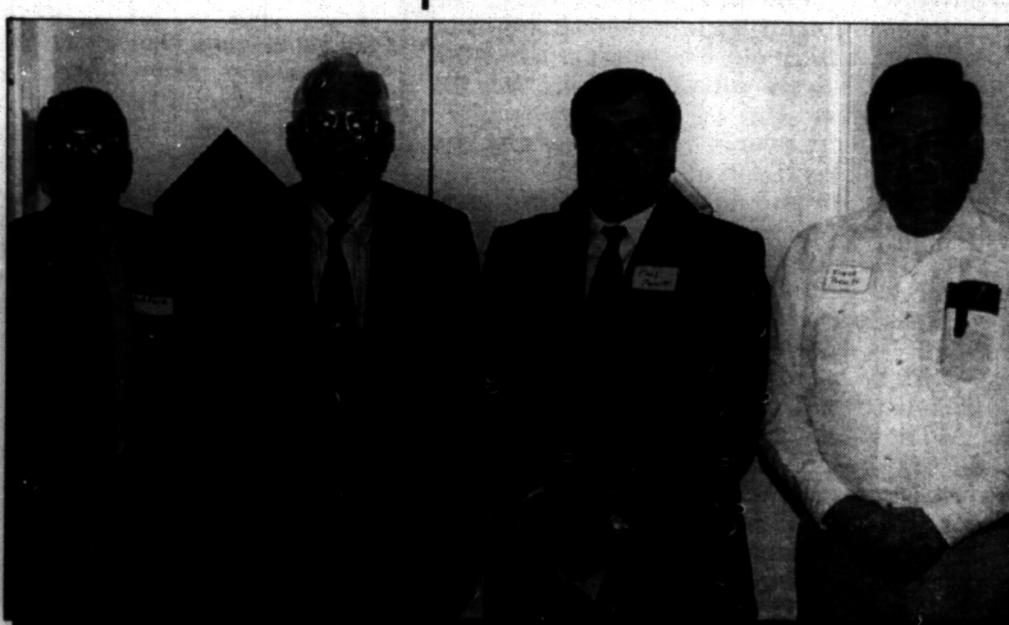
The new position of program coordinator was established and retiring missionary Harold Watson was elected to fill that position.

Two new board members were elected to three-year terms. They are: H. Rouse Caffey, retired chancellor, Louisiana State University's experiment stations; and Wayne Killebrew of Scooba, retired vocational agricultural teacher.

Carl Savell, pastor of host Highland Colony Church, extended a welcome and led in an opening devotional and prayer.

A noon luncheon was also held at the church in connection with the fellowship meeting.

The next meeting of the organization will be held in the summer, tentatively the third Friday in August with place and time to be announced.



AG LEADERS — New officers for the Mississippi Baptist Agricultural Missions Fellowship include (from left): Richard Parish of Amite, La., vice-president; Ed Trott of Jackson, secretary; Carl Prewitt of Byram, treasurer, and Frank Prewitt of Belzoni, president. (BR special photo)

# Amato crusade planned for Rankin County

BRANDON, Miss. (Special) — Sponsors say Rankin County churches are crossing racial and denominational lines to host an April 19-22 crusade featuring Southern Baptist evangelist Rick Amato at the Brandon High School football stadium in Brandon.

"Rick has a message from God that is timely, and he has the God-given ability to deliver that message to people from all walks of life," said

Brandon attorney Craig Slay, who is co-chairing the crusade along with Jarvis Ward of Pearl, former director of Mission Mississippi and now a national facilitator with Mission America.

"I didn't realize how big an undertaking a county-wide crusade would be. None of this would be possible without God's leadership and the cooperation we are seeing among our local churches," Slay said.

## 'Beautiful Feet' to spotlight leaders

The Beautiful Feet Celebration to honor spiritual leaders from a seven-state area including Mississippi is scheduled for 12 noon on May 9 at Macon Road Church, Memphis.

"The event will feature a hosted luncheon, beautiful gospel music, and an outstanding program. A framed copy of the Ten Commandments and a parchment Scroll of Commendation will be presented to each pastor in attendance," said Ed McAtee, president of the Religious Roundtable in Memphis.

Scheduled on the program to speak are:

- Tennessee Governor Don Sundquist.
- Oklahoma Congressman Ernest Istook, religious freedom advocate.
- Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville.
- Alveda King, niece of Martin Luther King Jr. and leader of "King for America," a moral values advocacy group.
- Don Wildmon, president of the American Family Association in Tupelo.

There is no charge for the event but reservations are extremely important, McAtee said. For more information and to confirm reservations, contact Macon Road Church at (901) 682-5420.

Ward echoed Slay's sentiments. "The focus of the crusade is obviously the spreading of the gospel, but a positive spin-off we want to see is future cooperation between black and white churches. We are trusting God to bless this effort in both respects."

Slay said momentum has been building since an initial January meeting brought together such diverse local churches and religious organizations as Sweet Rest Church, Mount Elam Church, McLaurin Heights Church, First Church, Brandon, Mount Holom Church, Grandview Church, Sweet Home Church, Wesley Biblical Seminary, and several others.

Plans are being made to tape the crusade for Amato to use on his VH-1 television show and other broadcasts — another reason planners are urging good attendance.

"We would like to see every church in the county to get involved," Slay said.

The crusade will begin each night at 7 p.m., and is open to the public. In case of wet weather, the crusade will move across the street to First Church, Brandon.

For more information, contact Linda Goodman at First Church, Brandon. Telephone: (601) 825-4080 or (601) 825-6766.



Amato



Slay



Ward

**Salt Lake City messenger cards now available**

Messenger cards for the 1998 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention June 9-11 in Salt Lake City are now available through the executive director's office at Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) and at associational offices around the state.

Messenger cards will not be mailed to all churches, but only to those churches requesting the cards for members who plan to attend the annual meeting. For more information and to request messenger cards, contact the MBCB executive director's office at (601) 292-3201 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 201.

## Festival of Flesh yields to message of salvation

By Wally Poor  
International Mission Board

SALVADOR, Brazil (BP) — They came to the frenzy called "Carnaval" expecting to forget their cares and worries for a few alcohol-fogged hours. Instead, more than 1,000 found Jesus Christ.

Some 300 Brazilian Baptists, International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries and Southern Baptist volunteers proclaimed the gospel among the estimated 2 million revelers swirling through the streets of Salvador, a seaport city in eastern Brazil.

Carnaval, which literally means "festival of the flesh," annually draws millions of visitors and tourists to Brazilian cities for raucous street parties that dwarf the merrymaking of New Orleans' Mardi Gras. Participants set off thousands of firecrackers welcoming the "gods" to the festivities.

Workers presented the gospel at five "paint talk stations" located strategically around the party area. Others shared their faith one-to-one, showed evangelistic films, staged gospel dramas, and explained the gospel to partygoers using beaded "power bracelets." More than 130,000 evangelistic tracts were distributed during the week.

A total of 1,059 decisions were registered, according to Wade Akins, the IMB missionary who trained missionaries and Brazilians to do the "paint talks," which use fluorescent paints and black lights in illustrated gospel presentations.

The paint talks touched lives in the most unexpected ways, said Robin Hadaway, who directs IMB work in eastern South America.

"The people who stopped were mostly burly, hardened men in their 20s and 30s, the kind of people who never go to church," he said. "As I was preaching, I thought, 'These guys will never believe.' But many of them raised their hands and trusted Christ. I had never seen anything like it."

The teams made gospel presentations each day from 4 p.m. until as late as 3 a.m. They ate, slept, and prayed in local churches, which began seeking to minister during the annual orgy five years ago.

Tim Kunkel, an IMB missionary in Uruguay, met and witnessed to Milton and Lia, a couple who drove about 3,000 miles from Brazil's southernmost state to take part in Carnaval.

Milton drove what is called a "trio-eletro," an 18-wheeler filled with sound equipment whose walls are huge loudspeakers. A band and dancers perform on the trailer roof. "When it goes by, the force of the blast literally almost knocks you off your feet," Kunkel said.

Lia was attracted to the paint talk presentation. "She prayed with me, asking Jesus into her life," Kunkel said. "She left with joy in her heart and an expression of joy on her face."

After accepting Christ, Lia awakened her husband, who had been driving the sound truck all night. He also accepted Christ.

Decisions made during the week were registered on a network of computers. Letters were sent to new converts and churches in their neighborhoods. More than 200 Brazilian youth were trained to follow up on the decisions.

Not surprisingly, workers participating in the effort met opposition and heckling. Some rocks were thrown. An egg thrown from the crowd hit one young person. A drunken man punched a volunteer in the chest.

"Preach during Carnaval? That's ludicrous," one woman told an arriving missionary. "No one will listen to you!"

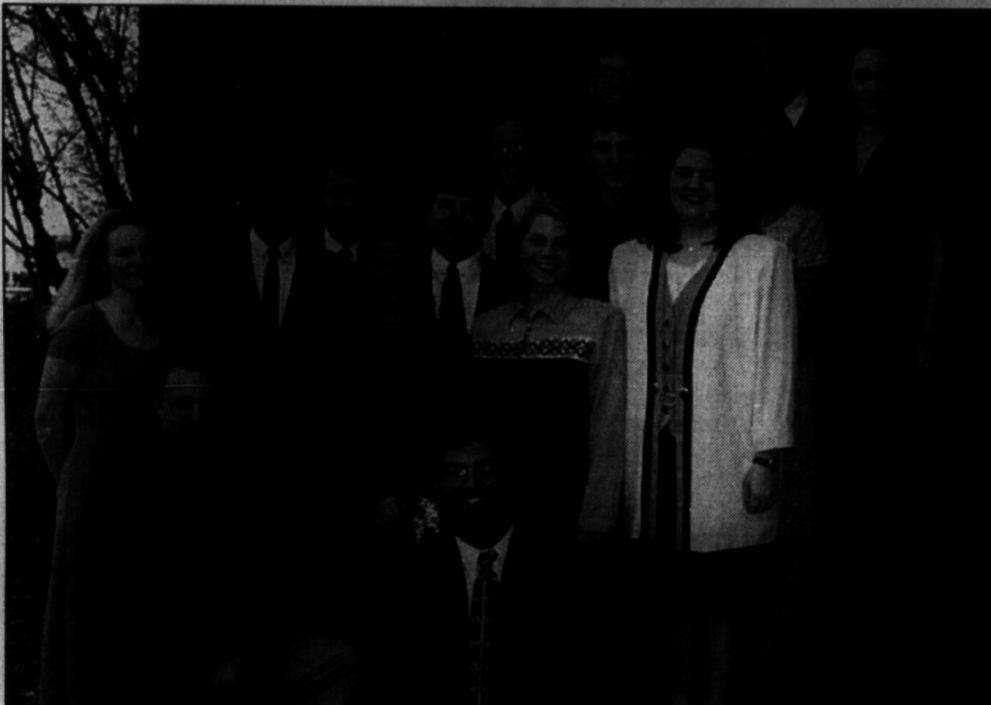
"I'd never done this before, preach on the streets anywhere, but particularly during Carnaval, where every form of evil was present and active," said Joey McNeill, IMB missionary to Brazil.

"The one thing that was a very present force was the power of God," he said.

"Prayer was the key to it all. The missionary teams prayed. The Brazilians counseled prayed. God protected. God spoke and moved, and lives were changed."



TAKING IT TO THE STREETS — Marcia Ellis (left), Southern Baptist missionary in Brazil, shares a gospel witness with a member of the Sons of Gandhi, a Brazilian cult named after the famous Indian holy man that promotes peace while dabbling in spiritism and voodoo. Ellis and the unidentified man met during the annual "Carnaval" (Festival of Flesh) in Salvador, Brazil. (BP photo by Leopoldo Ferreira Santos)



**William Carey College Speech and Debate Team** (Forensics) placed first overall at the Pi Kappa Delta Province Tournament held recently on campus. The Crusader Team also placed first in individual events sweepstakes and first in debate sweepstakes.

The Speech and Debate Team are (kneeling from left) Tom Huebner, director of forensics, and John Miller, assistant coach; (first row standing from left) Debbie Clark of Hattiesburg, Emmanuel Buckley of Hattiesburg, Bree Houser of Naples, Fla., and Mandy Trammell, Florence; (second row) Roger Lott of Seminary, Jason Ruiz of Gulfport, and Laura Lindsey of Pensacola, Fla.; (third row) Josh Hewitt of Tupelo, Danny Panter of Florence, Nakia Whitehead of Picayune, Jon Celoria of Smithdale, Brian Lucas of Petal; and Candace Sanders of Petal. Not pictured is Melanie Grimes of Hattiesburg.

Celoria and Sanders will have their persuasive speeches published in the Interstate Oratorical Association (IOA) book, "Winning Orations 1997." The IOA is an organization that has recognized the top two intercollegiate orators in every state since 1873.

## Historical Commission address changes

The address for the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission has changed. The new address is P.O. Box 4024, Clinton, MS 39058-4024.

## REVIVAL DATES

**Unity, Moselle:** April 19-22; Sunday, 10:30 a.m., lunch at noon, and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m.; Mike Routon, Petal, evangelist; Ken Culpepper, Laurel, music; Ralph Graves, Laurel, interim pastor.

**Calvary, Brandon:** April 3-5; Fri. and Sat., 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Sonny

Adkins, director, Evangelism Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, evangelist; Reuben McDowell, Columbia, music; Brent Bozeman, pastor.

**Macedonia, Louisville:** April 8-10; 7 p.m.; revival team will be Ron and Jeanette Davis, Laramie, Wyo.; Arnold Davis Sr. is pastor.

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second in the nation in the varsity division. The WCC squad, consisting of six two-person teams, placed eighth overall at the National Parliamentary Debate Association national tournament held in Lubbock, Texas.

New classes offered at Mississippi College by the Office of Continuing Education are: Creative Memories, April 9-30; Introduction to Windows 95, beginning April 13 from 6-8 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday evening for two weeks; and Conversational French, April 6-May 4. For registration information call (601) 925-3301.

**Mozart "Requiem"** will be presented by the Mississippi College Concert Chorale and Hinds Community College Choir on April 7 at 8:15 p.m. in Swor Auditorium on the Mississippi College campus. The doors will open at 7:45 p.m. The Concert Chorale is under the direction of James Richard Joiner, chairman of the Mississippi College Music Department, while the Hinds Community College Choir is under the direction of Terry Fletcher.

## STAFF CHANGES

North McComb Church, McComb, has called John H. Bley (Johnny) as pastor effective March 23. A native of Demopolis, Ala., Bley received his education at Livingston University, Livingston, Ala., and New Orleans Seminary.

His previous place of service was New Roads Church, New Roads, La.

**Sebastopol Church, Sebastopol,** has called Brent Madden as part-time youth director effective Feb. 11. David E. Sartin is pastor.



Madden

Main Street Church, Hattiesburg, has called Shannon Slover as minister of youth effective March 1. Slover previously served as minister to students at First Church, Amory.

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**Robert Lee Plemmons, III** of Hernando, a senior at Mississippi College (MC), is the recipient of the sixth annual Byrd Memorial Preaching Award. The award memorializes David Q. Byrd Sr. and Maude Byrd, as well as their son William Ashford Byrd and grandson Hal Newton Byrd. Members of the Byrd family have been staunch supporters of MC since first moving to the Clinton area in 1930. The recipient is chosen on the basis of Biblical and theological insight, creativity, structure, and style. Plemmons is the son of Robert Lee Jr. and Debra Plemmons. Pictured (from left) are Christine and Harrell N. Byrd, Plemmons, and James D. and Rosie Byrd.

**Susan Kennedy** of Hattiesburg, student majoring in Elementary Education at William Carey College, received a \$500 scholarship at the Mississippi Professional

Educators (MPE) 19th annual convention held recently in Jackson. MPE is an independent educator association with members from across the state.



**William Carey College** student Todd Cole from Fort Walton Beach, Fla., was awarded the J.D. Lundy Memorial Scholarship recently. Joseph Denver Lundy surrendered to preach over 50 years ago. He pastored churches in Mississippi and served as chaplain at Parchman and associational missionary for Leflore, Holmes, and Sunflower counties. Lundy served as education director at Calvary Church, Greenville, until his retirement in 1994. Pictured with Cole is Larry Kennedy, interim president of WCC.

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## SBC TO STAY IN NAME

Editor:

This June messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting will consider a proposal that the name of The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention be changed to LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

We are proposing this name because it better reflects the diversity of our ministries. The Sunday School Board was established and appropriately named in 1891 to reflect its one assignment, publishing Sunday School literature. Through these 107 years, our ministries have expanded dramatically.

While response of Southern Baptists to our proposal has been overwhelmingly positive, the one question I've been asked most often is, "Why are you taking Baptist out of the name?" We want everyone to know that we are not. Our official name is "The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention." Our new name, if approved, will be "LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention." Other SBC entities use this same descriptive phrase to clearly identify them as a part of the Southern Baptist Convention.

We feel this new name best reflects who we are and encompasses our expanding ministries. We ask for affirmation of messengers to move forward with a new name, and we value the support of all Southern Baptists as we continue to be

about our Father's work — reaching people for Christ, helping them grow in their faith and challenging them to use their gifts and skills to reach others.

James T. Draper, Jr., president  
The Sunday School Board  
Nashville, Tenn.

## TIME TO BE ALARMED

Editor:

This old 86-year-old layman is not an alarmist, pessimist, or a critic, but when we study God's Holy Word and realize the onslaught of evil that is so prevalent in every area of our society it is time we become alarmed.

We have become alarmed that we never hear warnings coming from our pulpits. We suppose that our pastors are leaving dealing with the horrors we see, read, and hear to our elected authorities. In many cases our authorities are committed to deal with these problems because they are legal.

Preach to the problem, pastors. Warn them before it is everlasting too late. We read a lot today about El Nino. One day out there if there are not more warnings we could be heading toward a human El Nino right here in this Bible belt.

It was reported that a passenger train was running toward New York. There was a head-on collision and fifty people were killed. One of the engineers was pinned under his engine. Blood pouring from his nose and mouth, he handed over a piece of yellow paper and said, "Take this. It will show that I was

given the wrong orders."

Unless the full counsel of God is preached to warn his people, they are getting wrong orders.

Tom Walden  
Jackson

## TURN TO THE LORD

Editor:

I have been a Baptist church member for over 42 years. I find that the believers are not standing for Jesus as we should. This is a way to grow in Christ. John 3:16 teaches that Christ made the way for us. When a person comes to Christ he doesn't understand the way to Christian life, you become the baby in Christ (1 Peter 2:2, James 4:6-8). We must be willing to live for Christ as best we can (2 Cor. 8:11-12). People look at Christians as we should not make mistakes but we all do.

Christians should be trying to live for Christ. The life we live is the willingness we give. Saved by Grace. Grace is the power of God to help us (John 1:12-13, Hebrews 4:16, and Acts 26:18).

Believers are his workman (2 Tim. 14-16). We can't earn salvation, it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). We must be willing to follow Christ (Luke 9:23). In this life we may lose the battle but win the victory.

The Lord knows the ones that try. To be a Christian we must turn from all sins by the Power of God (Romans 1:24-32 and Galatians 5:18-26).

People can turn to the Lord by believing in Jesus Christ (John 3:16).

Not only believing (John 3:18, John 3:1-5, 1 Peter 3:21, and Romans 8:24).

I believe if we would teach and stand on the Word of God we could see a change.

We all make mistakes in life and we can repent (Luke 13:3-5 and Rev. 3:15-16, 19).

Charles Martin  
Batesville

## SURVEY HELP NEEDED

Editor:

Please use this letter to help us get the information out regarding a survey we are doing through the Mississippi Baptist Secretaries Association.

Our annual state conference comes up Monday and Tuesday, April 13-14 at Camp Garaywa, Clinton.

This meeting will bring together church, association, agency secretaries, and others from throughout the state.

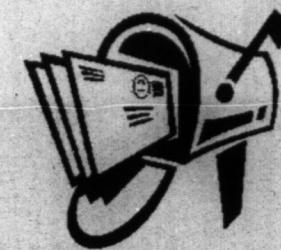
Our officers would like to compile a list of the longest-tenured secretaries in the churches, agencies, and associations of our state.

If there is a secretary in your church or church-related office who has served 40 years or longer, we would like to have her name, address, and years of service.

We ask that these be years of consecutive service in a full-time, paid position.

Send your information to me at Church Administration-Pastoral Ministries Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530 or to Linda Jenkins, c/o First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 780, Yazoo City, MS 39194-0780, before April 8.

Anne Martin  
Jackson



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.*

*Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.*

*Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)*

*Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.*

*Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.*

*No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.*

*When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.*

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## JUST FOR THE RECORD



A group from First Church, Clinton, (pictured above at Clay Street Mission, Greenville) traveled to Yazoo City, Greenville, and Tchula, to visit mission points. Donated clothing, household goods, food, school supplies as well as several computers and sets of encyclopedias were given to the missions. Anne Martin was coordinator for the trip.

**Heaven's Gates and Hell's Flames** will be presented at Friendship Church, Grenada, April 12-15, at 7 p.m. each evening. For more information and directions call (601) 226-4658, Mon.-Fri., 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Guy A. Hughes is pastor.

**Dakota Southern Baptist Fellowship** is seeking to fill the

positions of Executive Director, Associational Missionary for the Heartland Association, and State Language Missionary. Additional information is available by calling (701) 255-3765. Submit resumes to Personnel Committee, Dakota Southern Baptist Fellowship, P.O. Box 7187, Bismarck, ND 58507.

**Sylvarena Church, Wesson,** will present its Easter music, "A Time to Remember," on April 10 at 7 p.m., and April 12 at 7 a.m. The speaker will be Matt Buckles. Special music will be by Tommy Hall, Bonnie Causey, Missy Williams, and the church choir.



Baptist Women Pattie Dent (left) and Mera Hall (center) are pictured with John Young (right), pastor of Clay Street Mission in Greenville. The ladies were part of a group from First Church, Clinton, which brought many boxes of requested items for the mission.

**The Sky Family** will share Christ-centered mountain music at Robinhood Church, Brandon, on April 5 at 6 p.m. A

love offering will be received. For more information call the church at (601) 825-0975. Don G. Nerren is pastor.

## NAMES IN THE NEWS



**Davey Ladner** was ordained to the ministry on March 22 at Woolmarket Church, Biloxi. He is currently serving as youth minister at Big Level Church, Wiggins. Pictured (from left) are Paul Crowley, pastor of Woolmarket Church; Teresa and Davey Ladner; and David Perry, pastor of Big Level Church.

**Hazel Jackson Morton**, 87, died of heart failure in Clinton on March 18. She was the widow of Melva D. Morton, former pastor of First Church, Crystal Springs, from 1947-1954. Morton was a graduate of Hillman College. She is survived by two daughters, Marilyn Joiner of Clinton and Dorothy Ann

Beatty of Micco, Fla.; four grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and one sister, Sadie Sparacello of New Orleans. A memorial service will be held at Northminster Church on April 4 at 10 a.m.

**Simeon May** has been elected to the office of executive director of The National Association of Church Business Administration (NACBA). He will be resigning as minister of business administration for First Church, Richardson, Texas, after 15 years in this position. May will begin his duties with NACBA on May 1. May, son of long-time Mississippi pastor, the late Vernon May, grew up in Louisville. He is a graduate of



May

Baylor University and earned his certification as a Fellow in Church Business Administration from NACBA in 1991. NACBA is a 1,700 member ecumenical organization of professional church business managers from 40 denominations throughout the United States and Canada. May is succeeding Marvin Myers, who is retiring after 17 years of director of NACBA. Myers is also a former Mississippian and a graduate of Mississippi College.

**Ludie Powell and Mildred Dyess** were honored recently at Sand Hill Church, Jones County. Powell, 96, a charter member of Sand Hill Church in 1938, was awarded the Distinguished Lottie Moon Award.



Powell

"She has served for many years in many capacities. Her devotion to Baptist Women of WMU has been notable," said Theresa Blackledge, church clerk.



Dyess

Dyess was also given the Distinguished Lottie Moon Award. Her many years of service in her church and to Baptist Women of WMU was celebrated by a plaque from the church's organization.

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## NAMES IN THE NEWS



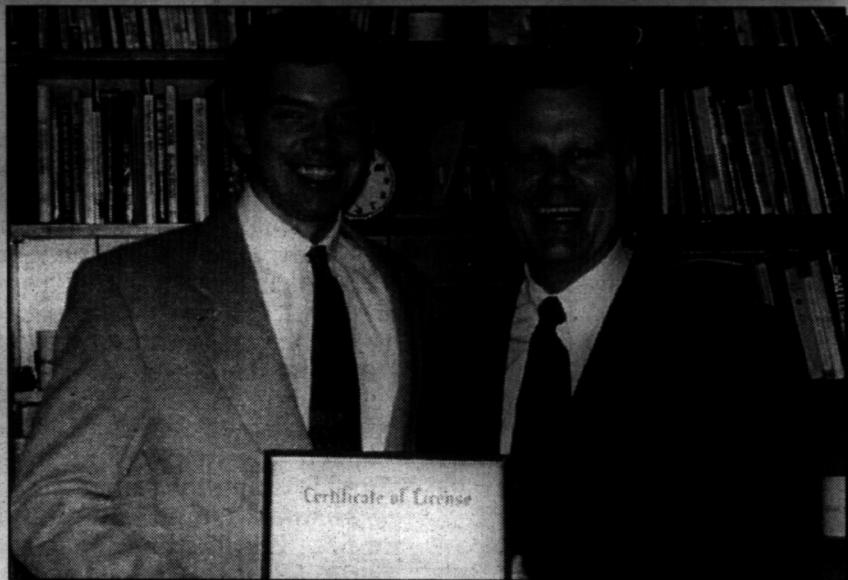
**David Champagne** was licensed to the ministry by Pleasant Hill Church, Lincoln County, on Feb. 22. He is a graduate of Florida State University and the Mississippi College School of Nursing and plans to enter New Orleans Seminary in the summer. He is employed as a registered nurse with the Southwest Mississippi Regional Hospital Home Health. On June 19 he will join about 50 others in a medical mission to Romania. Pictured with Champagne is Floyd F. Higginbotham, pastor.

**Baptist Memorial Health Care Corporation (BMHCC), Memphis**, has named Bill Poston, M.D., to the position of vice president of Clinical Integration and Quality for the Memphis metropolitan area which includes BMH-Medical



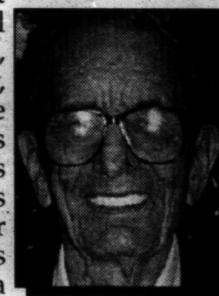
Poston

Center, BMH-East, and BMH-DeSoto. BMHCC has announced two administrative promotions, effective March 10. Jerry Brantley, former administrator for BMHCC, has been promoted to senior administrator for BMHCC-Metro Memphis. Jim Ainsworth, former administrator, Clinical Services, replaces Brantley and has been named administrator for the Medical Center. Both Brantley and Ainsworth began their careers at Baptist as staff pharmacists. Ainsworth was recently awarded University of Mississippi's Distinguished Alumnus Award. Since graduating from University of Mississippi in 1967, Ainsworth has continued to work closely with the University. For several years, he has not only served on the advisory board for the College of Pharmacy, but has also worked as a faculty member. Baptist Memorial Hospital is a teaching site for University of Mississippi College of Pharmacy.



**Robbie Armstrong** was licensed to the ministry on Sept. 7 by Broadmoor Church, Jackson. Armstrong is currently a sophomore at Mississippi College. He is the son of Bobby and Rhonda Armstrong of Brandon. Pictured with Armstrong (left) is Jim Futral, pastor.

**S. C. Graves** was recently honored at Sand Hill Church, Jones County, at a service designated as "S.C. Graves Day." He was honored for his 30 years of service as a deacon.



Graves was presented a plaque and designated as "deacon emeritus."

with emphasis on North American Missions. The church collected an offering of \$1,571 designated to North American Missions for Annie Armstrong Offering.

### HOECOMINGS

**Calvary, Durant:** April 5; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch served in fellowship hall following morning service; afternoon singing featuring The Revelation Quartet from Jackson; Cecil Mulloy, former pastor of Eastside Mission, guest speaker; Willie Bishop, pastor.

**Oak Grove Church, Lake,** recently held a program on "Starting Something New"



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1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (*I have sinned.*)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (*I repent.*)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (*I believe in Jesus.*)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him. (*I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.*)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

### Supreme Court declines review of late-term abortion law ruling

**WASHINGTON (BP)** — The U.S. Supreme Court has refused to review a lower court ruling against a late-term abortion ban, but supporters of Congress' prohibition on the partial-birth abortion procedure denied it would harm their efforts.

The high court announced March 23 that it would not hear an appeal of a case in which a 1995 Ohio law banning some abortions after fetal viability was overturned by a federal court. The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the lower court ruling.

"We continue to hope that the Supreme Court would completely reverse Roe v. Wade, but they do not have to reverse Roe in order to find that the ban on partial-birth abortions is constitutional," said Will Dodson, director of public policy for the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

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## Worthy of Praise

Mark 11:1-10, 15-18

By Grace Graham

Some adults are skeptical and question whether anyone deserves honor and praise. Jesus' preparing to enter Jerusalem on a donkey in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 revealed his true identity as the Son of God. His humility showed that he is worthy of praise.

Jesus demanded silence about his deity and spoke of himself in other terms. As he prepared to enter Jerusalem, he provoked the crowd to further speculate about who he was.

He provided a living parable to enable others to search for his identity. He sent two of his disciples to get a colt. The description "on which no one has ever sat" might suggest a sacrificial

animal; one fit for a holy purpose. This might also suggest Jesus knew that it would be the only one available.

The men were to simply say "the Lord has need of it." Was this a plan prearranged by Jesus with the animal's owner, or was it the power committed to the disciples acting in the master's name?

The disciples prepared the colt for riding by throwing their outer garments on it. This served as a saddle. Other garments were thrown on the road along with palm branches to show honor.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, not as a military general on a horse. This was truly what the prophet wrote in Zechariah



Graham

9:9, "Behold your king is coming to you; he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey."

**Experiencing praise (11:8-10).** "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" This song of the crowds expressed their thoughts that Jesus was the "coming one." This king was expected to establish his earthly kingdom there and then.

The cry "Hosanna" is a plea to "save now." Bartimaeus had begged for help. Were these crowds doing the same?

History would show that unlike the healing of blind Bartimaeus, this crowd would remain blind. Yes, blessed or happy are those who know the truth about Jesus and experience the kingdom of God.

What a joy it is to praise our Lord. Have you learned to do this? Many do so in singing songs, in writing, and in reading

God's Word. What will you choose to do to praise God today?

**Providing for praise (11:15-18).** Jesus went to the temple. To say that he was displeased with what he found there is an understatement. He began to drive out those who were buying and selling. His own followers were amazed as was the crowd.

It seems the proper activities in the temple were viewed very differently by Jesus than by the priests. They prospered by the selling of sacrificial animals especially to the large Passover crowd.

Ordinary Greek or Roman money could not be used in worship, so pilgrims had to exchange their money for Tyrian or Jewish coins. The exchange was not always fair. The holy place had been turned into a center for business.

It seems that Jesus was in full charge of the court of the Gentiles where the selling usually took place. He would not allow the temple to be used as a short cut to

another road. He reminded them of the words of Isaiah 56:7; "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."

He further claimed that they not only stole from those who came to worship, but actually had stolen from the house of the Lord itself.

Yes, he was reclaiming this house for its rightful owner. True worship of God can only happen when the things of the world are pushed away.

The chief priests and scribes began to seek a way to get rid of him. He was a threat to their way of life; indeed their very income.

Many times we become calloused to worldly ways. We accept traditional practices knowing that they may hurt someone.

Let's use our godly eyes to see what must be turned away in our homes and in our lives. Let's reclaim our temple for its original purpose; praise and prayer.

*Grace Graham is Childhood Education Director at First Church, Gulfport.*

# LIFE AND WORK

## Two thieves: settling an eternal destiny

Luke 23:32-43

By Jim Burnett

Can a person truly know what his or her eternal address will be while still living on earth? Some people would say no, but God's word reveals otherwise. In fact, the words of Jesus to the remorseful criminal beside him on the cross, "today you shall be with me in Paradise" convince us that eternal life for believers is a sure thing, a done deal, a reality.

Through this lesson, we will understand that trusting in Jesus brings about not only salvation from our sins, but also an everlasting relationship that is rust-proof.

God wants us to live with confidence about our eternal

destinies with him. To make this confidence possible, he paid a dear price: his precious Son.

Jesus was sentenced to death by the Roman government at the request of the Jews. The Jews viewed Christ as an imposter, a blasphemer, and a reprobate, for he claimed to be the son of God and king of the Jews. Unfortunately, many people in Jesus' day failed to see him as their sin-bearer and only hope for reconciliation with God.

**Life can be wasted (23:32-33).** While it is true that the blood of Jesus bleaches our sins away, the consequences of our sins often remain.



Burnett

For example, a person who has incessantly consumed alcohol or smoked cigarettes for years and quits will have to live with damaged goods, a body severely affected. A transformed life now with complete abstinence from drinking or any type of drug use will not repair or restore his body to 100 percent capacity.

One of the criminals dying on the cross repented of his sins and believed in Christ, yet still underwent the penalty for his crimes. Didn't God forgive him of past sins? Yes, but the consequences of his sins remained.

It is reminiscent of the Karla Faye Tucker case in which Mrs. Tucker, who committed murder, accepted Christ while in prison. Although upon conversion God pardoned her, the consequences of former actions led to execution.

We as God's people must make wise decisions and be

careful not to waste our lives earning the deadly wages of sin.

**Forgiveness is possible (23:34).** What persuaded the conversion of the thief? After all, in Mark's gospel we read that both felons were hurling insults at Jesus along with the crowd.

At what point did the criminal realize the divinity of Christ? Could it have been at the time he heard Jesus request God to spare his wrath on the guilty crowd? As part of the human race we are accustomed to an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Yet, Jesus' desire was reconciliation, not retaliation.

My friends, let us never forget God's love is the greatest force upon earth, and he offers this love to all. No matter how callous, stubborn, or rebellious some people are, God loves them and longs to pardon them.

**Rejection can be solidified (23:39-41).** Opportunity to be saved knocked on the hearts of both criminals but only one responded appropriately. The

other joined in with the crowd, lambasting Jesus with sharp and cruel words.

Pitiful is the man who believes Jesus to be his enemy, and yet there are many enemies of the cross today. We must warn humanity that to reject Christ is to choose hell as one's eternal home.

**It's never too late (23:42-43).** Do you know someone who falsely believes he is too old to be saved and used by God? I'm thinking of an eighty-four-year-old man whom I discipled a few years ago upon his conversion to Christ.

It's not too late. The best time to come to Christ, however, is at the age of accountability, not on our death beds, ensuring that we don't waste our lives. But to those who have waited, as long as they have breath in their lungs they are candidates for God's forgiveness.

*Burnett is pastor of Raymond Road Church, Jackson.*

# EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## Dying to save others

Mark 15:22-25, 29-34, 37-39

By Harold W. Simmons

The passage of scripture for this week is a part of the greatest love story ever told. It is about tragedy and triumph. The Son of God faced the tragedy of death in order to be triumphant over death and sin for us.

**Crucified (15: 22-25).** Jesus was taken to the place of execution that was either a place where skulls of persons who had been executed were laying around, or to a place that looked like a skull. We do not know for sure which site is the proper site — Church of the Holy



Simmons

Sepulcher or Gordon's Calvary.

The important matter is that Jesus suffered a humiliating and excruciating death. He refused a drugged wine that would have dulled the pain. His refusal to be drugged allowed him to bear all the suffering and discredits any claim that Jesus was not really dead but unconscious in a narcotic coma.

**Challenged to save himself from the cross (15:29-32).** I believe that the moment was used by the devil to be an "opportune time" to again tempt Jesus. To come down

from the cross and save himself would appeal to the human side of Jesus.

However, the Spirit of God was in control. The words of the religious leaders were abusive toward Jesus and caused more suffering. I believe the words were also for the on-lookers who might be followers. "This is what happens to those who go against us," was the message.

The insults could be construed as heavy evidence that Jesus was all noise and he could not do what he said. "He is no Messiah to save his people. He does not have the power to save himself."

Had Jesus met the challenge to come down from the cross, he would have been acting contrary to the will of the Father and contrary to the eternal plan of God.

**Experienced the depths of**

**suffering (15:33-34).** At the very time when one would expect the greatest sunshine and light, 12:00 noon, a darkness began that lasted until three in the afternoon. It was as though God lowered the sun to half-staff to signal what was about to happen. Jesus entered the world in unusual circumstance and he died with another unusual signal.

We hear the suffering of Jesus as he quotes from Psalms, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" This cry came from the depths of his soul. Even the pain felt by one of the kings who was taken into captivity and saw his children put to death just before his eyes were gouged out does not compare with the physical and emotional, and spiritual suffering of Jesus.

**Confessed as Son of God (15:37-39).** The centurion made

a very astute judgement for a non-believer when he stated with certainty that this man was the Son of God.

We are never made aware of any further profession or confession of faith by this centurion. We are told of the renting of the temple curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the worship area. The curtain separated all worshippers in the temple from the presence of God as represented by the Ark of the Covenant. Now all worshippers have direct access to God.

**Jesus Speaks to Us.** The Suffering Servant, Jesus, stayed on the cross and died a terrible death to show God's love for us and to pay the price for the forgiveness of our sins. God loves you and you mean a lot to him.

*Simmons is pastor of Hebron Church, Grenada.*

# THE VILLAGE VIEW

## The Baptist Children's Village



Ronny E. Robinson, Executive Director  
P.O. Box 27  
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### Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of **The Village View** is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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**JANUARY 31, 1998**

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### Dear Friend of Children,

Recently I was looking through some sermon material and I came across the poem "If Easter Be Not True" by Henry Barstow. I was reminded in this beautiful poem that all hope would be unfounded and this life would certainly be miserable "If Easter Be Not True."

I immediately thought about your children and mine here at The Village. So many of them come to us feeling as if there were no hope and no future for them. As we approach this Easter Season you have the opportunity to show the children that Easter is true and because Christ does live they have the hope of a newness of life through Him.

I covenant with you right now that the staff here at The Village will make every effort to share with each child the miracle of Easter. I only ask that you join us in this effort so that we have a firm foundation upon which to stand. It is difficult to talk to a child about a new beginning if we are unable to provide the essentials for that journey.

This Easter reassures you, as a child of God, that there is a new beginning. You can give that assurance to these children through your support and prayers.

I want to thank you in advance for what I know you will do in helping me to share the good news of Easter!



Because He Lives,

Ronny

Ronny E. Robinson  
Executive Director

If you or your church group are interested in Dressing-A-Child at Easter, please contact Chrystelle Thamess or Celeste Cade at (601)922-2242 or e-mail us at bcv1@misnet.com for more information.

# Rodeo's top clown keeps first things first

By Stacey Hamby  
*Missouri Word & Way*

MOUNT VERNON, Mo. (BP) — He has entertained in nearly every major arena, including Madison Square Garden in New York. He has appeared in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. He has even done the weather with Willard Scott of NBC's "Today" show — all because he's one of the best at what he does.

Mike Ulmer of Mount Vernon, Mo., has been named Clown of the Year by the International Professional Rodeo Association (IPRA) for two consecutive years.

Numerous other awards, usually in the form of engraved belt buckles, line shelves in his home, but he has learned that belt buckles don't really matter — living for the Lord does.

"What I do is a talent many people may not want," said Ulmer, a member of First Church, Mount Vernon. "but I'll do anything I can to use my talents for God."

The rodeo clown's job is twofold: distracting the bull and entertaining the crowd. Ulmer describes his entertainment as cornball comedy.

"When I'm standing on a barrel with a wireless mike on, I'm entertaining five-year-olds to 80-year-olds," he said. "Good, clean family comedy is hard. That's why I use a lot of animals." His animals include a pony named Scamp and a dog named Katy.

Although Ulmer has traveled around the nation clowning at rodeos, last year was the first time he took his talents to the mission field. "I told God that if he ever gave me the opportunity to do what I do for his benefit, then I'd do it," Ulmer said.

The only weekend he did not have a rodeo scheduled in 1997 was the weekend his pastor, Gary Gilmore, asked if he could join the church's mission team to Wyoming. Ulmer, in costume and using his animals, drew a crowd at a fairground arena in Rock Springs, Wyo., so the gospel could be shared.

"Mike has a real gift at opening people up through humor," Gilmore said. "He really knows how to plant a seed. They're not worrying about what's going on at home; they're laughing at what he's doing. But when you see him out there with the bulls in the arena, it's not clowning. He takes the attention off the danger and protects other people."

Ulmer acknowledged his job is dangerous. It takes courage and skill to distract a bull that has thrown off a cowboy. He also takes a moment to pray before entering the arena.

"I don't even really think about getting in the arena with a bull anymore," he said. "I've been doing it so long. I don't get nervous about taking a beating; I just dread it."

His wife, Debbie, said he's had his share of injuries, including a broken sternum and a finger cut off by a bull's horn. It was reattached.



Mike and Colten Ulmer

## Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx  
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UYWRBYQ WP RBYQY  
PFAGFRWDU WU FUT  
DRBYQ: ODQ RBYQY WP  
UDUY DRBYQ UFHY  
KULYQ BYFGYU CWGYU  
FHDUC HYU, EBYQYMT  
EY HKPR MY PFGYL.  
FJRP ODKQ: REYAGY

Clue: J=C

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Romans Twelve Two.

"It doesn't bother me so much now, unless I see a bull running right at him or hitting the barrel, and he's in it," said Debbie, who attends nearly all the rodeos with him. "It used to scare me to death, but he's real capable out there."

The trade may stay in the family. Their son is considering following in his father's footsteps.

"I like clowning," said Colten, age five, who joins his dad for some routines. "I've been doing this a couple of years. I always think about being a rodeo clown."

His dad noted that while the job of clown is dangerous, it's not as dangerous as riding bulls.

"The opportunity is there for Colten to clown if he wants it," Ulmer said. "I didn't have somebody to teach clowning to me."

He learned by experience. "They have schools now for rodeo clowning," he said. "I went to the school of hard knocks."

Ulmer said he has scaled back his rodeo appearances, so he can spend more time at home with his family. He also operates a family excavating business.

Two years after taking his first job as a rodeo clown, he was accepted into the IPRA. "Since then, I've gotten to go a lot of places and do a lot of things that a boy from Mount Vernon wouldn't have gotten to do otherwise."

One of those opportunities was to clown

for the World Finals in El Paso, Texas, in 1992 and 1993. In El Paso, Ulmer was the clown for cowboys from Mexico, Australia, and Canada, as well as the United States. For five years, he worked the IPRA finals in Oklahoma City — the Super Bowl of rodeo.

Ulmer holds the record for number of consecutive years — eight — as clown for the American Cowboys Rodeo Association finals, and the Missouri Rodeo Association has recognized him for two consecutive years as its Clown of the Year.

"I can look at all the awards I've won and the TV shows I've been on, and say, 'It's not going to matter,'" he said. "Either you're a Christian or you ain't. That's what it comes down to."

Living the Christian life on the rodeo circuit isn't easy, he said. "I've struggled to try to walk where I'm supposed to," he said. "Rodeo is a sport, and in any sport, it's difficult to be a Christian. You backslide, and God gives you opportunities to get it together."

When he sees an opportunity to share his faith with other rodeo clowns and cowboys, he takes it. "When people see you walk the walk, they ask questions," he said. "One time, I said I need to go to practice for an Easter pageant, and it made the others stop and ask what I was doing, where it was and what church I was with. I had a chance to say something then."

## FCC approves TV ratings system

WASHINGTON (BP) — The federal government's approval of the television ratings system, as well as the implementation of the technology to utilize it, has not deactivated the debate about its worthiness.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) accepted the television industry's voluntary ratings in its March 12 meeting. The FCC also approved rules for installation of the "v-chip," the equipment required by Congress in its 1996 Telecommunications Act to enable programs to be blocked from viewing.

The FCC rules require manufacturers to include the v-chip in at least half their models with a picture screen of 13 inches or larger by July 1, 1999. All models of that size and larger have to include the v-chip by Jan. 1, 2000. Boxes with v-chip capability for existing television sets are expected to be available even earlier.

The technology is intended to allow parents to block programming with certain ratings from being viewed in their homes. The system instituted, voluntarily but under pressure, by the industry last year uses the general ratings TV-G, TV-PG, TV-14 and TV-M much like the motion picture industry uses G, PG, PG-13 and R in its ratings. In August, the ratings were revised to add content warnings: V for violence; S for sexual situations; L for foul language; and D for suggestive dialogue.

NBC, however, has refused to include the V, S, L and D warnings.

The v-chip may be used to block programming by general categories, content ratings or a combination of the two.

The FCC's acceptance of the system has not silenced critics from inside and outside the TV industry. Among the criticisms are: Viewers don't pay attention to the ratings; the ratings, which are selected by the networks, are inconsistent; and the ratings give producers cover to show more violence and sex.

A recent Associated Press poll found about 70% of adults, including 51% of parents, say they pay little or no attention to the ratings, USA Today reported. A Wirthlin survey for Morality in Media, an interfaith, anti-obscenity organization, showed only 28% of Americans think a ratings system is an effective alternative to FCC enforcement of the indecency law.

The FCC should have rejected the industry ratings system and devised one that provided "objective information," said Morality in Media President Robert Peters in a written statement.

"If the FCC is permitted to hide behind this sham system instead of enforcing the broadcast indecency law; if Congress doesn't act now to extend the ban on indecent broadcast until 12 midnight and require the FCC to enforce the indecency law, then the struggle for decency in the public media is over — indecency has won," Peters said.

"What is so desperately needed from the TV industry is a clean-up project, not labels on an unremitting flow of moral garbage."

The broadcast indecency ban exists from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

